

**Amendments to the Claims:**

A listing of the entire set of pending claims (including amendments to the claims, if any) is submitted herewith per 37 CFR 1.121. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently amended) A method of operating a discharge lamp, ~~in particular during the first hours of operation after manufacture of the lamp,~~ in a first, ~~normal~~ mode of operation having a first operating frequency, which is activated when the a burning voltage of the lamp is ~~higher than (or equal to)~~ at least as high as a first limit value  $U_1$  that can be preset, and a second mode of operation with a second, ~~higher~~ operating frequency that is higher than the first operating frequency, which is activated when the burning voltage of the lamp ~~reaches (or undershoots)~~ is not more than the first limit value  $U_1$  ~~and which is chosen such that the growth of the electrodes, and accordingly the drop in burning voltage caused in particular by the formation of thinner electrode tips, is limited.~~
2. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the first operating frequency lies between approximately 50 and ~~approximately~~ 200 Hz.
3. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the lamp current is superimposed with current pulses in the first mode of operation ~~for avoiding unstable arc discharges.~~
4. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the second operating frequency is higher than the first operating frequency by a factor of between approximately 2 up to approximately and 20.
5. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the second operating frequency has a value of between approximately 300 and ~~approximately 1500 Hz for avoiding unstable arc discharges.~~

6. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the first limit value  $U_1$  lies at a voltage ~~which that~~ is approximately 10 V higher than a minimum voltage of a lamp driver unit ~~at which said unit that~~ can still drive the lamp with its rated power or a desired power.
7. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the first limit value  $U_1$  has a hysteresis.
8. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, with a third mode of operation which is activated when the burning voltage of the lamp ~~reaches (or undershoots) is not more than~~ a second limit value  $U_2$  ~~which can be preset and which that~~ is lower than the first limit value  $U_1$ , and in which third mode of operation ~~the a~~ discharge path between ~~the~~ electrodes of the lamp is lengthened by a change in at least one operating parameter of the lamp until the burning voltage ~~exceeds (or reaches) is at least as high as~~ the second limit value  $U_2$  ~~or the second and first limit values  $U_2$ ,  $U_1$  again.~~
9. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 8, wherein ~~an~~ the at least one operating parameter ~~is~~ includes a third operating frequency ~~which that~~ is lower than the second operating frequency by a factor of between approximately 2 and ~~approximately~~ 1000.
10. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 8, wherein ~~an~~ the at least one operating parameter ~~is~~ includes a DC component ~~which that~~ is applied to the lamp.
11. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 8, wherein the second limit value  $U_2$  lies at a level ~~which that~~ is approximately 5 V higher than a minimum voltage of a lamp driver unit ~~at which said unit that~~ can still drive the lamp with its rated power or a desired power.

12. (Currently amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the second ~~and/or third~~ operating frequency is synchronized with ~~the~~ an image frequency of a display system.

13. (Currently amended) A circuit arrangement ~~for implementing the method as claimed in claim 1, with~~ comprising:

\_\_\_\_\_ a controller that is configured to operate a discharge lamp in a first mode of operation having a first operating frequency, which is activated when a burning voltage of the lamp is at least as high as a first limit value, and a second mode of operation with a second operating frequency that is higher than the first operating frequency, which is activated when the burning voltage of the lamp is not more than the first limit value,

\_\_\_\_\_ a comparator-~~(14)~~ for comparing the burning voltage with at least one of the two limit values the first limit value, and

\_\_\_\_\_ a generator-~~(15)~~ for generating the first and second operating frequencies of the lamp current in dependence on ~~the~~ an output signal of the comparator-~~(14)~~.

14. (Currently amended) A lighting unit ~~with~~ that includes a high-pressure gas discharge lamp and ~~with~~ a circuit arrangement as claimed in claim 13.

15. (Original) A projection system with a projection display and a lighting unit as claimed in claim 14.

16. (Currently amended) A computer program with program code ~~means~~ stored on a computer-readable medium for implementing the method as claimed in claim 1 when ~~said~~ the program runs on a programmable microcomputer or microcontroller.

17 (Canceled)

18. (New) The method of claim 9, wherein at least one of the second operating frequency and third operating frequency is synchronized with an image frequency of a display system.

19. (New) The method of claim 8, wherein the discharge path is lengthened by the change in the at least one operating parameter until the burning voltage is at least as high as the first limit value.

20. (New) A system comprising:

a voltage source that is configured to provide a variable output to an arc discharge lamp, including a generator that is configured to provide a variable frequency drive signal to the output to the lamp, and

a comparator that is configured to compare a voltage of the voltage source to a voltage limit to provide a comparison output,

wherein

the generator is configured to selectively provide one of a first and a second frequency drive signal to the lamp based on the comparison output.

21. (New) The system of claim 20, including a projection display.

22. (New) The system of claim 20, including a second generator that is configured to selectively provide a current gradient based on the comparison output.